

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Fall 2016

It Was a Fun, Fun, Fun Day!

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

On Saturday afternoon September 10, kids and adults alike enjoyed Spy Pond Park and learned about how to care for the pond's environment at our annual Fun Day.

What kinds of fun did we have, you ask? Well...

- Over 60 mosaics were made, thanks to Art Beat;
- Over 40 nature crowns were decorated and worn, thanks to Tinkergarten;
- Over three cartons of birch bark were turned into beautifully decorated boats and launched in the pond;
- Over 150 nature-puzzles were solved to win prizes, some donated by the Book Rack;
- Over a dozen families searched the park for Spy Pond History Mystery clues or leaf species;
- Over 120 people got boat rides to Elizabeth Island with the Arlington Land Trust and the crew team coach;
- Dozens of faces were painted adorably;
- Two music acts, Liz Buchanan with Gordon MacFarland, and the Harmonators played and sang lovely harmonies, thanks to producer Mark Sandman;
- There was a musical parade of nature-crown-wearing children to the dedication of the "Penny the Swan" sculpture;
- Five martial arts students did a demonstration with their teacher Charles DeVigilio; and of course,
- Lots of information about the FSPP and the Mystic River Watershed Association was given out at the information tables.

A thousand thanks to the many, many volunteers who made Fun Day 2016 happen. Let's do it again next year!



PHOTO BY RAM SUBRAMANIAN

Arlington Land Trust members push the Arlington/Belmont Crew team boat full of Elizabeth Island visitors

Help the Spy Pond Park Rain Garden

By Emily Snyder, Arlington Garden Club

Five years ago a small group of Arlington environmental activists received a grant to establish a local educational rain garden, defined as "a garden with depressions and plants suited to be wet some of the time." Site consideration led to choosing the location near Spy Pond Park's playground. While Arlington is now home to several rain gardens, Spy Pond Park's rain garden was the town's first.

Designed by local landscape designer, Sally Naish (Light & Shade Gardening), the garden was planted by volunteers with a variety of drought-tolerant plants native to New England. Since then, Arlington Garden Club members have maintained the garden as one of the Club's Civic Beautification projects.

As time has gone on, the Garden Club has taken on an increasing number of civic projects and is now looking for a few local gardeners to take over maintaining the Spy Pond Rain Garden. Maybe you? The garden has proven to be a welcome, appreciated addition to Spy Pond Park, and maintenance is not a lot of work. Upkeep requires about 1 - 2 hours/month weeding, watering, pruning and doing some trash cleanup. There is also space for the fun part: planting more plants. No previous experience required, and you get to hang out in such a gorgeous setting! Please contact me if interested, and I will provide an orientation and maintenance history to any interested gardeners: ells.ells@verizon.net.



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Music by The Harmonators

It wasn't a perfect day. It rained on us a little. Some volunteers had to stretch to fill multiple roles to cover those absent due to health and family problems. A broken generator silenced the music for a while. But, the troubles were few and the pleasures were many.

An Exceptional Year on Spy Pond

By Bill Eykamp



Bald eagle consumes a dead fish extracted from Spy Pond

In spring, you could not miss the dead carp. Downwind, they were almost stacked up, very big, and very dead. As the weather warmed, the aroma ripened. It was not a fun time.

Someone called the Commonwealth, and they called me. We had an interesting discussion. Neither of us was particularly upset—carp are in fact bad news overall—but we were all quite curious and concerned for the general health of the pond. After listening to my observations, the naturalist said it was almost certainly an epizootic (think epidemic with “zoo” (animals) replacing “dem” (us)). He said it was widespread in the Charles basin last year, and had almost certainly spread. He asked which box on the form he should check, and I selected 30-130 as the best range. I probably understated it, but it was my best guess at the time.

A stack of dead carp does more than smell. I was certain it would attract every gull on the coast, but the gulls were mostly uninterested. We did get lots of eagles that had been pretty much on the scene all spring, especially the juveniles. One adult bald eagle went after a floater, trying to drag it ashore, but couldn't get airborne, and after sinking well into the water, gave up and spent the next hours on a tree drying off. Turkey vultures made an appearance one day, a real rarity on the pond. Eventually, various carrion consumers finished off the flesh, and then the bones slowly disappeared. By end of summer, the evidence was mostly gone.

This was the year for treating the outbreak of Eurasian milfoil, our perennial problem aquatic weed. We were thwarted last year because a permit had expired, so the infestation was really dense this year. But, it isn't as simple as it once was. To get our permit renewed, we had to spend a lot of money and time

searching out and mapping an endangered plant, Englemann's sedge. We have a fair amount of it some years, and very little other times. It is an annual, with persistent seeds. It does not grow in water, so herbicides that are dissolved in the pond are no threat as long as the water doesn't cover the plant (which would kill it anyway). The plan then is to find a pond level that all the sedges along the shore are safely above. We got agreement on the safe level, which required lowering the pond. We generally lower it anyway, because it reduces the quantity of the very expensive herbicide required. So we lowered it, a little extra in case of rain, and the pond was treated. Then something happened. More accurately, nothing happened—it didn't rain. In 2010, the pond went up a foot right after we treated it, but this year it just kept getting lower.

Spy Pond has two islands. Everyone knows about Elizabeth Island, but only some know about Rock Island. It has been clearly visible for some months now, usually a perch for about a dozen cormorants. It is generally some inches below the surface, almost always invisible, so it has been struck by every sailor on the pond at least once. It is dramatic experience!

The low water also exposed the broad expanse of the Route 2 sandbar, the focus of a very long, thus far, unsuccessful battle with the state highway department for its removal. The dry sand proved ideal for horseshoes.

We also have an unusual concentration of filamentous algae. The filaments form into dense mats that lie on the bottom until something gives off some gas (rotting vegetation, for instance) that buoys them up. These mats then blow to shore, forming a thick unsightly scum that everyone dislikes. Seeing this massive mess, it is hard to believe that these are actually microscopic single cell plants that just like to hook up into strings. This problem can be treated, but it wasn't this year.



Playing horseshoes on a usually submerged sandbar in Spy Pond

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Did you know that according to a recent Trip Advisor ranking, Spy Pond Park (SPP) is the #1 'thing to do' in Arlington? Thirty-three reviewers gave SPP rave reviews resulting in 4 ½ stars to catapult our park to the favorite destination in town! https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g29512-d4228013-Reviews-Spy_Pond_Park-Arlington_Massachusetts.html. We love the park, and it's gratifying that so many others do, too!

Fun Day in Spy Pond Park was a wonderful success, thanks to Betsy Leonard-Wright's organizational skills drawing in so many volunteers who were eager to help in making the day an event that children look forward to each year. We all certainly appreciate the time and effort she took to pull it all together! You're the best!

The summer flew by and we had some hot weather for our Work Days with the Arlington/Belmont Crew Team joining us. We always welcome their assistance in tackling some major aspects of the park's care. Thanks to the DPW for ordering and planting a beautiful new Serviceberry not far from Linwood Street next to a bench. Gratefully, Bev and Wally Williams have taken on the responsibility of watering it and a couple others near Pond Lane in distress due to the drought. Now, fall maintenance and end of the year issues are upon us. We are eager for more volunteers to help round out the year. We hope to see more of you at our last Work Day on October 22. If you are a member of an activity group that would be interested in giving back to the community, please have the group leader contact us to get involved: lallystow@yahoo.com.

And, our end of the year solicitation will be coming to those in our database soon. So, if you haven't sent us your 2016 membership dues to support what we do, you can do so at that time. Or, if you care to add to the amount you've already contributed to get an additional tax donation, we'd appreciate that, too. Please think about joining us on December 4 for our 2016 Annual Meeting and Potluck at the Jefferson Cutter House lower level Conference Room, speaker TBA. More information about this will be enclosed with our end of the year solicitation. Thanks for your kind support in any way you can.

Sincerely,



Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

Town Day 2016

By Sally Hempstead, Outreach Chairman

A few early morning joggers run past our Spy Pond shed as Marshall McCloskey and I load up the car with all the equipment for Town Day. The weatherman predicted a gorgeous day and booths are already popping up on both sides of Massachusetts Avenue. The Friends of Spy Pond canopy sits among the other park tents near Jason Street with Friends of Menotomy Rocks and Robbins Farm Parks to the north and, much to our surprise and fascination, a group demonstrating jiu jitsu to the south.

Marshall McCloskey and I take the first shift at nine fielding questions about Spy Pond Park, signing up future townfolk for our Work Days and basking in the accolades received from visitors who love what we do. At ten, Betty Athanasoulas arrives enthusiastically embracing Town Day and attracting many attendees to our booth with her outgoing manner. My trusty volunteers, Bev and Wally Williams, take over the eleven o'clock spot ready to greet visitors with a warm smile and more helpful information.

Everybody loves Spy Pond Park, so our booth is always popular. As usual, the Spy Pond "Become a Spy" stickers are a hit garnering much needed donations for our park. At twelve, Lally Stowell arrives. She is on our Beautification Committee and is extremely knowledgeable on all matters pertaining to Spy Pond Park plants and gardens and able to answer a myriad of inquiries from local residents. The big question again this year is why the inhabitants aren't allowed to swim in the pond and is it really filled with toxins both organic and chemical. The best answer is that there is no lifeguard, and being a Town facility it has to have one to be open to the public. The kayak and canoe rentals on summer weekends and the playground are also popular topics and much loved by all.

Last, but definitely not least, Karen Grossman, the President of the Friends of Spy Pond Park and our biggest asset, brings her expertise to the booth between two and three. Town Day is drawing to a close, we pack up the leaflets, the newsletters, the T-shirts and our mascot, the goose, until next year.

Last Work Day

Oct. 22 1-4 p.m. (rain date October 23 1-4 p.m.)

Liability waivers are required for all participants in the above Work Day activities. If you are working, please download the form from the FSPP website, fill it out and bring it with you. Children below 18 years of age must have parental signature to participate in Spy Pond Park activities sponsored by the Friends of Spy Pond Park.

TOWN OF ARLINGTON



Diane M. Mahon, Chair
Daniel J. Dunn, Vice Chair
Kevin F. Greeley
Joseph A. Curro, Jr.
Steven M. Byrne

Board of Selectmen

September 10, 2016

Karen Grossman, President
Friends of Spy Pond Park
P.O. Box 1051
Arlington, MA 02474

Dear Ms. Grossman,

On behalf of myself and my colleagues on the Arlington Board of Selectmen -- Vice Chair Dan Dunn and Selectmen Kevin Greeley, Joe Curro and Steve Byrne -- I am happy to congratulate you and your fellow Friends of Spy Pond Park, as well as the leadership of Arlington Public Art, on the permanent dedication of Arlington sculptor Kevin Duffy's creation, Penny the Swan, at Spy Pond Park. We commend Mr. Duffy on his vision and initiative in setting this project in motion, as well as the Park and Recreation Commission on their decision to allow this beautiful piece of art to continue to grace the shore of Spy Pond. We regret that we are unable to join you today.

Mr. Duffy's sculpture serves as a wonderful bookend to the nearby mural at the Arlington Boys and Girls Club and buttresses our efforts to promote Arlington's cultural and natural gems.

Our Board has worked with the Arlington Cultural District Managing Partnership, a public-private endeavor that is seeking an official Massachusetts Cultural District designation from the State, and I would note that the proposed District encompasses Spy Pond Park. The continued placement of a work of art which is so consonant with its surroundings and which represents with such straightforward simplicity the natural beauty of Spy Pond's wildlife serves only to strengthen the Town's bid, even as it continues to provide enjoyment to so many park visitors of all ages.

Thank you very much for your accomplishment and for all that you do for Arlington and our residents.

With deepest regards,

Diane M. Mahon

DIANE M. MAHON, Chair
Arlington Board of Selectmen

“Penny the Swan” Dedicated at Spy Pond Park

By Adria Arch, Arlington Public Art

After three years of temporary placement at Spy Pond Park, “Penny” the Swan has finally been granted a permanent home! The swan sculpture was dedicated in a short ceremony following the annual Fun Day at Spy Pond Park on Saturday, September 10. Activities Chair, Betsy Leondar-Wright, and President, Karen Grossman, organized the event for the Friends of Spy Pond Park. Thanks to the Arlington Land Trust, Tinkergarten, Art Beat, MA Audubon Belmont Habitat, Arlington/Belmont Crew Team, the Mystic River Watershed Association, and Kickstand Café for making it a success once again!

“Penny” has the distinct honor of being Arlington’s first permanent piece of public art since the Uncle Sam statue in Arlington Center, placed in the 1970s. Since her arrival in the spring of 2013, the 400 lb. granite sculpture has won the hearts of visitors to the park, especially those of children.

Quoting Stephanie Marlin-Curiel of the Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture, “Penny the Swan is a graceful figure

that catches people by surprise as they approach the water’s edge. To find a swan or a rock by Spy Pond is not unusual, but to find a rock that is a swan, is a surprise.”

At the dedication, Karen Grossman read a letter of congratulations from Diane Mahon, Board of Selectman Then, Don Vitters, Parks and Recreation Commission, and I also discussed the landmark that “Penny’s” dedication represents in Arlington’s quest to bring more public art to our community.

Kevin Duffy, Arlington based stone sculptor, created Penny the Swan as a temporary



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Liz Buchanan and Lauren from Tinkergarten lead a parade of nature-crowned children and adults through the park to the dedication of “Penny” the swan sculpture at Linwood Circle

public art piece for the park in 2013. He received a grant from the Arlington Cultural Council to help pay for his materials. In an unprecedented move, the Arlington Parks Commission gave Kevin permission for Penny to be displayed at the park. This year, the Friends of Spy Pond Park and Arlington Public Art persuaded the Commission to allow Penny a permanent residence in the park.

Stone sculptor Kevin Duffy spent most of his childhood in Massachusetts and has been an Arlington resident since 1988. Kevin attended Montserrat College in Beverly MA, the Art Students League of New York, and graduated from the Academy of Fine and Applied Arts in Rotterdam, Netherlands. For many years Kevin worked as a Technical Illustrator and Graphic Designer. Later he became involved in Monument Conservation which led to his working in granite again. Kevin has restored monuments in parks and cemeteries throughout New England and has both designed and carved numerous memorials and public art works. Kevin’s other stone sculptures currently placed in Arlington include a granite rabbit at Waldo Park, a sculpture in the Arlington Center for the Arts Courtyard, and a custom memorial, at Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Arlington Public Art (APA), a Town committee under the auspices of Vision 2020, has been promoting and facilitating public art installations since 2010. APA sponsors the annual art installation and fundraiser, “Chairful Where You Sit”, and commissions paintings on transformer boxes throughout Arlington. This year, APA is facilitating a major temporary public art effort on Mass Ave. called East Arlington Stories, due to be on view in early October. Find out more about APA at www.arlingtonpublicart.org.

Editor’s Note: Most of this article first appeared in the Arlington Advocate on Thursday, September 15, 2016. Some additions were made after the original publication.



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Adria Arch, Arlington Public Art, addressed those who gathered for the swan dedication

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings

at Karen Grossman's
Sunday, Oct. 9, 2016, 7:00pm
32 Hamilton Road #402

Park on Linwood Street off Mass. Ave. or on
 Lakehill off Lake St. at the far end of the complex.

& Annual Meeting
at the Jefferson Cutter House
Sunday, Dec. 4, 2016
5 pm potluck dinner, 6 pm meeting

Lower level parking lot entrance, speaker TBD; details to
 be emailed and announced on the FSPP website.

RSVP (optional) to 781-646-5990
 email fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

To join Friends of Spy Pond Park...

Send your annual dues (\$15 individual, \$25 household, \$5 low-income) to:
 FSPP, P.O. Box 1051
 Arlington, MA 02474-0021
 For more information, call a Friends officer.

President: Karen L. Grossman	(781) 646-5990
General Vice-President: Open	
Treasurer: Marshall McCloskey	(617) 548-9877
Recording Secretary: Beverly Williams	(781) 316-1917
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Videographer: Open	
Beautification Committee:	
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Gail McCormick	(781) 646-0614
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Ruth Slotnick	(813) 732-2639
Lally Stowell	(781) 777-2759
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Deepak Bidwai	deepbidwai@gmail.com
Chair for Outreach/Park Events:	
Betsy Leondar-Wright	(781) 648-0630
Fundraising Chair: Open	

Newsletter contributions and general comments can be sent to
fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

Friends of Spy Pond Park • <http://www.friendsofspypondpark.org> • P.O. Box 1051 • Arlington, MA 02474-0021



Sunset at Spy Pond